

Eating, Diet, and Nutrition

Eating the right foods can help you feel better when you are on dialysis or have a kidney transplant.

Staying healthy with kidney failure requires watching how much of these elements are included in your diet:

- **Protein** is in many foods you eat. Protein is in foods from animals and plants. Most diets include both types of protein. Protein provides the building blocks that maintain and repair muscles, organs, and other parts of the body. Too much protein can cause waste to build up in your blood, making your kidneys work harder. However, if you are on hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis, you need lots of protein to replace the protein that dialysis removes.
- **Phosphorus** is a mineral that keeps your bones healthy. Phosphorus also keeps blood vessels and muscles working. This mineral is found naturally in foods rich in protein, such as meat, poultry, fish, nuts, beans, and dairy products. Phosphorus is also added to many processed foods. You need phosphorus to turn food into energy; however, too much can cause your bones to weaken.

- **Water** is in drinks and in foods such as fruits, vegetables, ice cream, gelatin, soup, and popsicles. Your body needs water; however, too much can cause fluid to build up in your body and make your heart work harder.
- **Sodium** is a part of salt. You can find sodium in many canned, packaged, and fast foods and in seasonings and meats. You need sodium to help control the amount of fluid in your body; however, too much can cause high blood pressure.
- **Potassium** is a mineral that helps your nerves and muscles work the right way. Potassium is found in fruits and vegetables such as oranges, bananas, tomatoes, and potatoes. You need potassium for healthy nerves and brain cells; however, too much can make your heartbeat irregular.
- **Calories** are found in all foods and are especially high in oils and sugary foods. You need calories for energy; however, too many can cause weight gain and high blood sugar.

Talk with your clinic's renal dietitian to find a meal plan that works for you. Each treatment requires a different diet. If you are on hemodialysis, you have to stay away from foods such as potatoes and oranges because they have lots of potassium. If you are on peritoneal dialysis, eating potassium is fine. Instead, you may need to watch your calories. Your food needs will also depend on your weight and activity level.

Changing your diet may be hard at first. Eating the right foods will help you feel better. You will have more strength and energy. Having more energy will help you live a fuller, healthier life. Read more in *Eat Right to Feel Right on Hemodialysis* at www.kidney.niddk.nih.gov.